

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Millennials vs. The World

Honors Presentation
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ABSTRACT

The goal of this project is to delve into millennials’ understanding of animal species’ extinction and how that affects them. This will be made into an informative art series of three colored pencil pieces that look at what will be lost with animal extinction and the emotional hole it leaves for people. The rate for animal extinction is increasing due to many man-made factors like plastic, pollution and deforestation; thus, this topic needs to be explored. This cross-section of animals and humans creates an intriguing interaction where the byproduct of human civilization is damaging wildlife. This project looks into changing rates of pollution, plastic and deforestation and sees if the younger generation is invested and what emotions are tied to these animals. Data was collected from documentaries and applied into colored pencil art pieces with mixed media elements. The pieces contrast something mundane with the harshness of animal extinction. A public critique was done after the pieces were completed to gauge people’s understanding.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What parts of the animal species’ extinction do millennials care about, specifically? What do we lose when animals go extinct and what are people currently doing to affect animal extinction? This will turn into several colored pencil art pieces that depict the animals and the relationship between man and the world.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This research is important since the entire planet is changing negatively due to human causes (such as oil and plastic.) While these manmade products are essential to man’s day-to-day use, the earth and the creatures inhabiting it are put into a critical position.

- 1) 63 billion gallons of oil are used every year to supply the U.S. with enough plastic water bottles (90% of those are only used once)
- 2) 300 pounds of plastic is the average amount of plastic used per individual every year
- 3) Sunlight and salt breaks down plastic in the ocean into “microplastic.” It has rough edges and attaches to bacteria when digested
- 4) Plastic cannot be digested in the stomach, so it accumulates over time
- 5) Oil causes birds to drown and even more animals to starve



Figure 4. Above is an image of a bird wrapped in plastic waste.



Figure 5. This image displays the damage of oil spills on animals.



Figure 1. Above is the image of the effect of oil on the birds that live in the ecosystem. The beauty of a bubble bath contrasts the damage of oil.



Figure 3. Above is the image of the process work used to create the different textures for the background of the piece. The textures were based off the action of oil attaching to an animal as well as microplastic connecting to bacteria microbes in the stomach.

CONCLUSIONS

After a critical analysis with fellow students and design professors, I learned more about the state of the millennial mindset and their emotional reactions to the content. Most students felt a dark connection to the pieces, like something that can be described from a horror film, yet the beauty was calming. Without even being prompted, there is a sense of disgust at the truth behind the pieces. This project provided me with the information that not much is being done with the environment and even though people care about the outcome, the average person won’t alter their current behavior.



Figure 2. The image above displays an albatross choking on a plastic pop holder that is also acting as a purse handle. The bits of plastic on the jacket resemble the pieces that the bird would swallow and accumulate in the stomach.

METHODS

I sketched out ideas and discussed with a design professor and students to make the best informed decision about how to create the pieces. Secondary research was done to inform the pieces and to create an accurate portrayal of the animals used. I went back for revisions until completed. This ended up being three large Prisma colored pencil drawings (approximately 2’x3’) on toned mat board for enhanced color to tell the story of the cross sections of humans and animals. The background textures were made by thumbnail sketches. I used three dimensional pieces to help demonstrate the manmade aspects. The mixed media pieces include plastic waste, a necklace chain, and hot glue. I then administered a critical analysis of the art pieces by hosting a public critique.

LEARNING POINTS

With the critical feedback, I learned that it has to be done in a formal fashion to receive the most detailed and useful criticisms for the purpose of this project.